

# [News story: World war one Durham Light infantry soldier finally given military burial a century after his death](#)

Private (Pte) Thomas Telford Edmundson has been laid to rest over 100 years after he died on 26 April 1915 fighting during the Great War. Since his death aged just 20 years old, he has remained in a shallow grave in a field near the town of Zonnebeke, Belgium and today (Wednesday 14 March) he was given a ceremonial burial with full military honours at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Perth (China Wall) Cemetery in Belgium.



Sergeant Gareth Forrest, 3rd Battalion, the Rifles, reads a passage from the Order of Service, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

The service, organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services, was conducted by The Reverend John Swanston, CF, Chaplain to the 1st Battalion the Rifles.



Riflemen from the 3rd Battalion, the Rifles, prepare to lower the coffin of Private Edmundson, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

It followed the discovery, in November 2014, of remains of a British world war 1 casualty were discovered in Zonnebeke. Artefacts discovered included a single Durham shoulder title. Following forensic samples being taken from the remains in December 2016, extensive research was undertaken by the JCCC and the Durham Light Infantry Museum/Durham County Council had narrowed the number of potential candidates to 8. Further work including genealogy was conducted by JCCC who successfully traced descendants for all 8 soldiers, all of whom provided DNA samples for comparison.

A positive match with a second cousin once removed of Pte Thomas Edmundson confirmed the identification.

Louise Dorr, JCCC said:

Pte Edmundson was one of only 8 Durham Light Infantry soldiers still missing from the Second Battle of Ypres, which is why it has been possible to identify him by means of DNA.

I'm delighted that Thomas' family have been very involved in the planning of today's service. It's been a huge pleasure to get to meet them, some of whom have travelled from Canada. Thomas Edmundson made the greatest sacrifice for his country and it's humbling to be here today with his biological and military family

to honour him.

Pte Edmundson was born in Sunderland in 1894 to George and Mary Edmundson. He enlisted into his local regiment, the Durham Light Infantry.



Riflemen from the 3rd Battalion, the Rifles, carefully fold the ceremonial Union Flag in honour of Private Edmundson, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

The 1st/7th Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry was involved in the second Battle of Ypres which was fought from 22 April to 25 May 1915 for control of the strategic Flemish town of Ypres in western Belgium. The Battalion's war diary records them as camping beside the Ypres-Zonnebeke road on 25 April 1915 before advancing over open fields towards Zevenkote and Gravenstafel in the afternoon of 26 April, taking up a position north of Zonnebeke. The Battalion lost 8 soldiers in action on 26 April 1915. None of them have a known grave and their names are recorded on the Menin Gate Memorial in Ypres.



Riflemen from the 3rd Battalion, the Rifles, stand alongside dignitaries, officials, family members and members of the public during the burial service of Private Edmundson, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

Family members who paid their respects to Pte Edmundson included several second cousins twice removed, some of whom had travelled from Vancouver, Canada for the ceremony. Current members of the 3rd Battalion, the Rifles paid tribute to their former colleague by providing a bearer party for his coffin.

David Hall, a cousin of Pte Edmundson on behalf of the Edmundson family said:

There was fascination and great interest at the news that human remains found in Zonnebeke, Belgium, had been positively identified as a relative of ours, Thomas Telford Edmundson. He died in the First World War, but had no known grave. We were unaware of this branch of the family, and sadly this part of Edmundson line died out, as Thomas had been the sole surviving son, a younger brother of Thomas' died in infancy. There was also a sister, but we have no information about her. Our branch of the Edmundson family is widely scattered, with some still living in Sunderland, and others living in Canada and Australia.

We have been greatly impressed by the painstaking work organised by the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC) of the Ministry of Defence. They had to identify descendants of 8 Durham Light

Infantry soldiers who were killed in fighting around Zonnebeke on 26 April 1915 and had no known grave. Then they had to arrange the collection of samples for DNA testing, and this led to the identification.

Sub Lieutenant Harry Lewis, British Embassy said:

It is an honour to be involved in this service. After so much time, Pte Edmundson has been given the military funeral that he deserves. It is important that he receives a final and proper resting place, after having made the ultimate sacrifice during the first world war. This occasion is especially poignant as his family has joined us here today to remember him.

It is important that we continue to commemorate these soldiers, who 100 years ago gave their lives for freedom. Although we may not know everything about who they were, we honour their immense courage, conviction, and service. We give thanks for these extraordinary acts made by ordinary people.

Mel Donnelly, CWGC said:

More than 100 years after his death, Private Thomas Edmundson has been laid to rest at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Perth (China Wall) Cemetery with the honour and dignity his sacrifice deserves. Today's ceremony is an opportunity for us to give thanks for this brave man's service, to understand the effect his loss had on his family and his community, and to renew our determination to remember him and his fallen comrades forever.

Captain Patrick Keating, Adjutant 3 Rifles, successor regiment to the Durham Light Infantry, said:

It is an immense honour for the Riflemen of 3 RIFLES to be involved in the burial of Pte Edmundson of the Durham Light Infantry who faithfully served his country over 100 years ago. It is humbling to think of this sacrifice and the debt which the country owes him and we are proud that we in the RIFLES carry on the traditions of the Durham Light Infantry and our other antecedents to this day.

A new headstone bearing Pte Edmundson's name has been provided by the CWGC, who will now care for his final resting place in perpetuity.

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## [Press release: Military grade underwater cameras working to end illegal fishing for eels in the Fens](#)

Fisheries enforcement staff at the Environment Agency have been working with new underwater sonar technology to assess fish populations, especially where it's hard to use classic methods like netting and electric fishing. The technology is also being put to excellent use elsewhere and giving us eyes underwater as well as above.

Our fisheries enforcement work helps to protect the environment and ensure fisheries income is generated through rod licence sales. All anglers require an Environment Agency rod licence to fish in England and Wales. The Environment Agency also lead on the enforcement of permits for migratory species like eels, smelt and lamprey. Regular auditing of these fisheries is essential to ensure protection of these iconic and in the case of eel – a critically endangered species; but also to ensure that the activity is regulated and sustainable.

Illegal eel fishing is a priority for the Environment Agency who are the lead organisation responsible for the conservation of this now endangered species. The eel stock is in decline, recruitment is at an all-time low, and exploitation of the stock is currently unsustainable. We regulate the fishing industry, which is carried out by only a handful of licensed fishermen. We also protect eel habitat, improve passage allowing ore access for eels further upstream and regulate other activities that might impact on each life stage of the species. While the West of England has issues with elver fishing – the capture of tiny juvenile eels returning from the America's for a global market, in the East the fens provide excellent habitat for mature eels, vital in supporting this European species. Adult "silver" eels will return to the Sargasso Sea as their final life stage to spawn and much of our enforcement work protects this phase.

Our new sonar equipment has allowed us to see, with amazing clarity, where we've never been able to before – under the water.

This makes checking for nets, especially illegal equipment, much easier and makes us more efficient and in some cases 100% effective. A recent audit of a river near Kings Lynn resulted in a record illegal eel net seizure; 16 nets in total capable of significantly impacting an emigrating eel population – hundreds of eels were released. The nets were removed and we worked with Norfolk police to investigate the case.

Using boat mounted sonar equipment we can travel up to 10km per day, checking every inch of channel for illegal and submerged equipment. This is our greatest weapon in halting the illegal exploitation of eels and gives us a

chance to completely rid waters of illegal instruments. We are using this technology to regulate other areas of illegal fishing including poaching, netting and trapping. You can see from the images how easy it is for us to spot illegal equipment, here both ends of an eel “fyke” net can be clearly seen stretching across the river channel. We use boats and specially trained enforcement staff to check traps and remove any illegal ones we find.

Anyone fishing for eels should be permitted, be fishing within the conditions of the licence, and nets must include visible and valid tags, as well as being equipped with otter guards too.

Any suspected illegal fishing activity should be reported to the Environment Agency’s Incident Hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Anyone wishing to fish for migratory species including eels should visit [Permission to trap crayfish, eels, elvers, salmon and sea trout](#).

All anglers need a valid Environment Agency rod licence which can be bought using a credit or debit card by calling the Environment Agency’s telesales line on 0344 800 5386. Alternatively, they can be obtained from any Post Office or visit:

[Buy a rod fishing licence](#)

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## **[News story: Top industry group pledges to support veteran entrepreneurs](#)**

The Institute of Directors (IoD) became the latest organisation to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant yesterday at their annual conference in London.

The IoD’s Covenant pledges also include allowing veterans to access their organisation’s expert network of advice and resources for entrepreneurs, joining with the MOD on forging stronger links between business and the military, and encouraging businesses to help the small number of veterans who struggle with mental health issues.



Earl Howe and Stephen Martin sign the Armed Forces Covenant.

The signing comes as National Express, the first business to sign the Covenant in 2013, renewed their commitment to the military community at an event on Horse Guards Parade.

The signings demonstrate how the support for the Armed Forces Covenant has grown across the UK since it was first introduced as part of the Armed Forces Act 2011, with over 2,200 organisations having pledged their support.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served, and their families, are treated fairly.

## **Institute of Directors**

Defence Minister Earl Howe attended the annual Institute of Directors Open House conference in Pall Mall yesterday to countersign the Armed Forces Covenant with Director General Stephen Martin.

Defence Minister for the House of Lords Earl Howe said:

The Institute of Directors signing the Armed Forces Covenant sends a powerful message to its members and those in the wider economy that they are a Forces-friendly organisation, helping to attract high-quality Service leavers who bring with them a wide range of skills and experience.

Stephen Martin, Director General of the Institute of Directors, said:

I'm extremely proud to signing the Armed Forces Covenant on behalf of the Institute of Directors, and I look forward to the IoD's continued engagement with the Ministry of Defence. In signing the Covenant, the IoD will help to ensure that the immense contribution the armed forces make to our society and to business does not go unrecognised. Not only do service personnel provide the security and freedom that underpins our lives, but they also have the potential to become great assets to the UK economy, bringing the wide array of skills and experience they have gained to businesses activity the country.

In becoming a signatory to the covenant, we will use the tools at our disposal to highlight the many benefits of employing those coming out of the armed forces. In keeping with our Royal Charter, we will also look to help budding ex-services entrepreneurs to establish the networks, confidence, and skills they need to start and scale their own businesses.

The IOD will open its 2,500 members strong IoD99 networking and social events to ex-service entrepreneurs and champion stronger links between the business community and the Armed Forces, showcasing those that highlight the benefits to employers of taking on ex-Service personnel.

## **National Express**

Defence Minister Tobias Ellwood countersigned National Express' Covenant renewal alongside their Group Chief Executive Dean Finch during a networking event at Horse Guards Parade in central London yesterday. A Covenant branded National Express coach, which will be navigating the London airport routes, was parked on Horse Guards for a photoshoot with the Queen's Guard to mark the occasion.



Defence Minister Tobias Ellwood at the National Express re-signing on Horse Guards Parade.

National Express Group Chief Executive Dean Finch said:

We're very proud to have been the first company to sign the Covenant and I am delighted we are signing an even greater commitment today. Armed Forces personnel and their families do a great service to this country and it is right that companies like ours do what we can to support them.

We employ many ex-services members and current reservists and also want to recognise their significant contribution to our company and the country. Our extended commitments demonstrate both the success of our first covenant and our commitment to growing this important partnership with the Ministry of Defence. I would like to thank all involved in this great initiative.

National Express will offer guaranteed interviews to service leavers and their families for all National Express roles across Coach and Bus, provide ten days extra leave for staff in the Reserve Forces, and offer free bus travel to families visiting soldiers at the Military Hospital at the QE in Birmingham and to volunteers on Remembrance Sunday.

The company already employs over 40 former forces personnel and reservists in a variety of roles including: drivers, health and safety officers, bus engineers, and customer service advisors from all over the Armed Forces,

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## [News story: Novichok nerve agent use in Salisbury: UK government response](#)

*Updated:* Statement to the OPCW Executive Council added

On Sunday 4 March Sergei and Yulia Skripal were poisoned in Salisbury with a military-grade nerve agent of a type developed by Russia.

### **G7 foreign ministers' statement**

The [G7 foreign ministers issued a statement](#) condemning the nerve agent attack and agreeing with the UK's assessment that it is highly likely that the Russian Federation was responsible.

### **Letter to NATO**

On 13 April UK National Security Adviser Sir Mark Sedwill sent a [letter to Jens Stoltenberg NATO Secretary General](#) setting out further information on how Russia has the technical means, operational experience and the motive for the Salisbury attack. The UK Ambassador to Russia gave a [briefing to the international diplomatic community](#).

### **OPCW report**

On 12 April the [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons \(OPCW\) published their report](#). It confirmed the UK findings: the toxic chemical used in the attempted assassination of Sergei and Yulia Skripal was a military grade nerve agent – a Novichok.

The [Foreign Secretary gave a statement on the OPCW report](#) and the [Head of UK Delegation updated the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](#).

On 18 April Peter Wilson, UK Permanent Representative to the OPCW gave a [statement to the Executive Council](#).

[OPCW findings](#)

Read the [Foreign Secretary's statement](#).

## **UN Security Council and OPCW meetings**

On 5 April the UK Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Karen Pierce, gave a [statement at the UN Security Council emergency meeting](#) called by Russia. Writing in the Sunday Times on 8 April, the Foreign Secretary said that [only Russia could have committed this crime](#).

At the request of Russia, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Executive Council met on 4 April. The [Acting UK Permanent Representative to the OPCW responded](#) on the UK's actions, in line with the Chemical Weapons Convention. Following the defeat of Russia's proposals, the [Foreign Secretary gave a statement](#).

## **Prime Minister's 26 March statement on collective diplomatic expulsions**

Speaking in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister said that 18 countries have announced their intention to expel more than 100 Russian intelligence officers. This includes 15 EU member states as well as the US, Canada and the Ukraine, and is the largest collective expulsion of Russian intelligence officers in history. Find out more in the Prime Minister's [Commons statement on national security and Russia](#).

The Prime Minister also spoke about this in her [Commons statement on the March European Council](#).

On 27 March the Foreign Secretary wrote in The Times that [our allies will expel Russian officials because they share our view of the threat posed by the Kremlin](#) to their values and security.



View our [Twitter Moment about our allies and partners expelling Russian intelligence officers](#).

In his 28 March [Mansion House speech](#), the Foreign Secretary thanked the 27 countries and NATO for expelling Russian officials whose presence they deem to be no longer conducive to the public good.

#### [Russian disinformation: 6 points](#)

The Russian government's response has demonstrated disdain for the gravity of the Salisbury attack.

## **Prime Minister's 14 March statement: immediate actions including diplomatic expulsions**

In her [statement to Parliament on 14 March](#) the Prime Minister said that Russia provided no explanation as to how this agent came to be used in the UK. There is no alternative conclusion other than that the Russian State was culpable for the attempted murder of Sergei and Yulia Skripal, which was an unlawful use of force by the Russian State against the UK. The UK government would:

- expel 23 Russian diplomats identified as undeclared intelligence officers

- propose new legislative powers to harden defences against Hostile State Activity and ensure those seeking to carry out such activity cannot enter the UK
- suspend all planned high-level contacts between the UK and Russia

On 17 March the Foreign & Commonwealth Office issued [a statement in response to the Russian government's decision to expel UK diplomats](#), following the British Ambassador's meeting with the Russian government.

On 22 March British Ambassador to Russia, Laurie Bristow, gave a [briefing to the international diplomatic community](#)

## **Russian State disinformation**

Writing for the Telegraph on 20 March, the Foreign Secretary looks at the [Russian State's disruptive behaviour in Russian elections and the Salisbury attack](#).

[Russian disinformation](#)

## **Russia's impact on global security**

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson wrote an [article in the Washington Post](#) setting out Russia's threat to global security.

[The Kremlin has positioned Russia in direct opposition to the West](#)

## **Prime Minister's 12 March statement: seeking explanation from Russia**

On 12 March [Prime Minister Theresa May gave a statement](#) in Parliament. Either this was a direct act by the Russian State against our country, or the Russian government lost control of this potentially catastrophically damaging nerve agent and allowed it to get into the hands of others. The [Foreign Secretary spoke to the BBC](#) and reiterated the Prime Minister's message.

## **Russian state aggression in the past few years**

[Pattern of Russian state aggression](#)

## **Home Secretary's initial statement**

On 8 March the Home Secretary Amber Rudd gave an [initial statement on the investigation](#) into events in Salisbury. This followed Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson's [response to an Urgent Question](#) in Parliament on 6 March.

## **International response**

### **World leaders**

On 22 March the [Prime Minister met with President Macron and Chancellor](#)

[Merkel](#) where the 3 leaders agreed on the importance of sending a strong European message in response to Russia's actions. The [European Council also issued a press release](#) on its conclusions about the Salisbury attack

On 15 March the leaders of France, Germany, the US and the UK have issued a [joint statement on the Salisbury attack](#).

The Prime Minister has spoken with world leaders about the ongoing investigation. Each expressed their solidarity with the UK:

- [call with Japanese Prime Minister Abe on 20 March](#)
- [call with Polish Prime Minister Morawiecki on 18 March](#)
- [call with Italian Prime Minister Gentiloni on 16 March](#)
- [call with Australian Prime Minister Turnbull on 16 March](#)
- [call with French President Macron on 15 March](#) and on [12 March](#)
- [call with Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau on 14 March](#)
- [call with Prime Minister Xavier Bettel of Luxembourg on 14 March](#)
- [call with US President Trump on 13 March](#)
- [call with German Chancellor Merkel on 13 March](#)

On 13 March the Foreign Secretary also [called for a united response](#) with our international counterparts. Find out more about the international response in our [14 March Twitter Moment](#).

## **European Foreign Ministers express their solidarity**

The [Foreign Secretary spoke to the media](#) before the Foreign Affairs Council on 19 March and the [Foreign Affairs Council issued a statement](#).

### [Foreign Ministers express solidarity](#)

On 21 March [UK National Security Advisor Sir Mark Sedwill gave a statement](#) on his meeting with the EU High Representative, senior EU officials and representatives of member states.

## **Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons**

Peter Wilson, UK Permanent Representative gave an [update to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons \(OPCW\)](#). This follows his [statement to the OPCW on 13 March](#).

[Independent technical experts from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons \(OPCW\)](#) arrive in the UK on 19 March to begin their investigation into the nerve agent used in the attempted assassinations in Salisbury.

### [Independent OPCW investigation](#)

## **NATO**

The Foreign Secretary and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg held a [joint press conference on 19 March](#).

On 15 March National Security Advisor Sir Mark Sedwill [briefed the NATO North Atlantic Council](#)

## **Other international organisations**

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office also raised this issue in other international forums:

- Head of UK Delegation Sian MacLeod gave a [statement to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe](#) on 15 March
- Ambassador Jonathan Allen gave a [briefing to the United Nations Security Council](#) on 14 March
- in the 37th Human Rights Council session Julian Braithwaite, the UK Permanent Representative, gave a [statement to the United Nations in Geneva](#) on 14 March

## **Related government announcements**

On 17 April the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs gave an update on [decontamination work in Salisbury](#).

On 15 March Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson announced a [£48 million investment in a new Chemical Weapons Defence Centre](#) to maintain our cutting-edge in chemical analysis and defence.

## **Advice and guidance**

- latest Foreign & Commonwealth Office [travel advice for Russia](#)
- Public Health England [advice for people in Salisbury](#)